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FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

NOTES ON ESKIMO CUSTOMS. — A number of interesting letters from Alaska, written on the cruise of the U. S. revenue cutter *Rush*, by Mr. Wardman, appeared in the "Pittsburgh Dispatch" of 1879. They contain some notes on Eskimo customs and lore. All hunters have their favorite charms to bring them good luck. It will not do to cut up a white whale with an axe. Wood must not be chopped when seals are near at hand. On such occasions firewood must be cut with a knife. A hunter's wife must not taste meat of a moose he has killed himself when it is fresh, but after three days she may have some of it. In some cases, for weeks after a woman has become a mother, she will not be permitted to eat flesh of any kind, else her husband would have bad luck. After a white whale has been caught, numerous ceremonies are performed by the successful hunter. The last of these is the trimming of a narrow strip from the edge of each fin, from the tail, and from the upper lip, before the animal is hauled out of the water. These scraps are carried away by the successful hunter, sacred to his own uses. After the hunter has performed his ceremonies he walks away, leaving those who choose to cut off what they want. During the night there is a great feast, the kettles being kept boiling till morning.

The Eskimo shaman is not born to his profession, as among the Tlingit of southern Alaska. He is the creature of accident or of revelation. He has a dream sometimes, which being verified he goes off alone into some remote place, where he fasts for several days, after which he comes out and announces himself a shaman. Now he is ready to heal the sick, to regulate the weather, and to supply game in seasons when it runs scarce. His manner of curing disease is by incantation no vile drugs being administered. The cure, if effected, is due to his miraculous influence with invisible spirits. If he fail and the patient die, he persuades the mourning relatives into the belief that some other shaman or some old woman bewitched the deceased, and then death is the lot of the offending party who came in between the doctor and the dead.

There is an instance reported here (at St. Michael's) of a shaman against whom some prejudice was created in this manner on the Kuskokwim. He was hunted from village to village, finding no resting-place anywhere, so far as heard from, till he passed up northward beyond St. Michael's.

Some of these shamans believe in themselves, but as a rule they know they are humbugs. There was one at the mission up the Yukon, who, during a scarcity of deer, proposed to go up to the moon and get a supply. It should be known that, according to Eskimo accounts, all game comes out of the moon, the origin of which orb and others is thus accounted for: In the beginning there was plenty of land, water, and sky, but no sun, moon, and stars. An Eskimo, who noticed that the sky came down to the ground in a certain locality, went forward and made holes in it with his paddle. One stroke formed a rent which the sun shines through; another tore away the curtain from before the moon; and smaller stabs with the paddle made

holes which now appear as stars. (This account is somewhat remarkable, as it is known that the Alaskan, as well as other Eskimo, consider sun and moon as sister and brother. The moon being merely a hole through which the light shines from a land where the supply of game is inexhaustible, all a shaman has to do for his tribe is to go up and throw some down through the hole. There is no doubt in the minds of some that they can do this. A shaman at the mission, who volunteered to go up to the moon after game, fastened a rope around his body beneath his arms and about his neck. Then he went down under the floor of the dancing house. He left one end of the line in the hands of some men above, with instructions for them to pull as soon as he got out of sight. They obeyed, and pulled vigorously until they became tired. (It appeared that in this case the enterprising shaman was strangled, but the performance is of great interest, being known by fuller descriptions from the Central Eskimo and from Greenland.)

In order to have influence among the people, it is necessary that the shaman should be possessed of mysterious powers. One of them would present his hands to be bound together with leather thongs behind his back, and would pull the lashings through his body, and show the wrists still fastened in front. But it was indispensable that this miracle should be performed beneath his skin robe. Some of them eat fire; and one shaman at Pastolik, between the mouth of the Yukon and St. Michael's, permitted himself to be burned alive to satisfy his people that he was not a swindler. He had an immense pyre of logs arranged near the dancing house, in which all of the people were assembled, and at a given signal he took a position in the centre, and the torch was applied. He stood there calm as a martyr, with a wooden mask upon his face, and gazed upon the people as they retired into the dancing house "to make medicine" for him.

In half an hour they came out and saw nothing but the mask in the centre, the logs around it being all on fire. The next time they went out all was burnt down to cinders, and they again returned to the singing house. Presently a slight noise was heard on the roof, followed immediately by the descent of the shaman, mask and all, among them. The effect was wonderful, but one of the shaman's confederates later on explained to a white man that there had been a hole under the logs of the pyre through which the shaman crawled out, and that the mask seen in the fire was on a pole, not on the shaman's face.

When the Eskimo dies, he goes to that land which the wild geese seek in the winter. It is a long way off, and the entrance to it is a narrow pass, which may be traversed only when the snow is melted out of it. Some men — the bad ones — have greater trouble than others in making the journey, being obliged to go through a long, dark passage, probably underground. Once in the promised land, they will find clear skies, warm weather, and an inexhaustible supply of game.

The origin of man and animals, according to the account of the Tennesseanai Indians, is as follows: Man and all animals were created by the eagle and the bluejay jointly. After man was nearly finished, the jay proposed to give him wings, but to this the eagle objected, saying that he had

already been made too powerful, and to permit him to fly would be to make him altogether dangerous. Some controversy occurred on this, but the eagle would not give way. That dispute explains why the eagle keeps as far from man as possible, while the jay goes into the camps with impunity, and takes whatever he wants, if he can find it.

REMEDY FOR THE INFLUENZA. — A correspondent of the New York "Tribune," January, 1890, favors that journal with a cure for the prevalent influenza: "Coming to the influenza, he believes there is nothing so good for it as a black catskin poultice laid on the breast. 'The cat,' says our valued correspondent, 'should be very black. See that she is killed in the dark of the moon on a cloudy night, as the fur contains more electricity than. Make an ordinary bread poultice and put it on the hide side. A little Spanish-fly will improve it. Apply hot. The electricity, which is life, will pass into the body, driving the good influence of the poultice before it. A little old whiskey taken internally will do no harm. Be sure that the cat is very black and the night very dark.'"

A CORRESPONDENT sends the following, without naming the journal from which the dispatch is taken:—

"New Orleans, August 13. — A big voodoo festival was given last evening at the west end of the Lake Pontchartrain suburbs of New Orleans by an assemblage of mixed white and colored. Dr. Alexander, the colored voodoo doctor, presided. The police showed no disposition to interfere. A decided sensation has been caused here by the discovery that voodooism, or rather belief in the power of the voodoo doctors, is increasing, and is accepted not only by the negroes, but by the whites. A raid on Dr. Alexander's establishment discovered a large number of women there, most of them whites, who visited him because they believed his incantations improved their health. Surprise was increased to horror when it was found these, almost completely disrobed (for a voodoo seance requires the 'patient' to dance without clothing around the fire or snake which represents the devil), were of respectable middle-class families. Since then the voodoo belief seems to have spread, and a number of meetings have been reported, that last night being the largest yet."

It would seem that there should be little difficulty in obtaining authentic accounts of proceedings so well known to the police as these are said to be.

MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FOLK-LORE SOCIETY. — A stated meeting of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Folk-Lore Society was held on Wednesday evening, January 8, at the parlors of the First Unitarian Church, Chestnut Street, above Twenty-first.

Dr. Carl Lumholtz, the distinguished Australian explorer, delivered an extemporaneous address on the customs and superstitions of the aborigines of Australia, in which he described them as living in temporary huts made of palm leaves, which are constructed from day to day, as occasion requires. They do not like to leave the camp at night. An Australian is gay and happy all day, but when the sun goes down he becomes restless and low-spirited. He is afraid of being killed and eaten by some predatory tribe,